

Telesat Canada Act

talk about shooting up a satellite. In committee I asked questions about space, something people do not generally understand. I asked whether space is available up there because it appears that space is quite limited. The answer I received was that space is definitely limited but that at the present time there should be no difficulty at all for Canada to receive, as a result of going through appropriate international procedures of registration with the I.T.U., a parking space for our satellite. Although the minister took this answer at its face value I do not think the committee ought necessarily to take it as the gospel truth. Certainly we feel that we will be able to obtain space up there for our satellite, but we must admit that at present we do not have a designated space. That state of affairs may have changed but that was the situation when the committee met. It is necessary to have international agreements in order to reserve space for our satellite.

Also to be considered in any international agreements is the question of frequencies for broadcasting, something that Canadians and hon. members may not be aware of. I suggest it is quite possible that those working on the project have been so carried away with the beauty of the idea that they cannot see the forest for the trees. It is time that we studied this matter carefully in committee.

When we were pursuing this subject in committee I suggested that United States Officials felt that a domestic satellite system for the United States was too expensive for them. They think it is too expensive for them but we do not think a satellite is too expensive for us. Usually the United States does not shy away from anything that is costly. Surely it will cost us just as much as it would have cost the United States to instigate this system. Furthermore, it is not only a question of putting a satellite into orbit. There is also the question of land stations. Although we have a certain number of land stations it seems that they cannot be used for satellite transmission purposes and that we shall have to build other land stations. Specialists of the minister's department believe that the whole satellite program will only cost between \$50 million and \$60 million. Frankly I am sceptical about those figures because, from what I have been led to believe by people outside the government, the cost of such a system could be a minimum of \$200 million a year. If that is so, although such a system would be very nice, Canada simply cannot afford it.

[Mr. Stewart (Cochrane).]

I have raised these questions, Mr. Speaker, because instead of trying to figure out how best to organize the proposed corporation I suggest the entire matter ought to be referred back to the committee immediately so that experts may be called to give their opinions. Neither the minister nor any other hon. member wishes to be sold a bill of goods by people who may be very well meaning but not completely informed. I suggest that it is up to us to scrutinize this entire matter much more carefully than we have done.

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, may I remind the minister of some history, because it seems to me that in this legislation he is repeating the tragic error that was committed when the Conservative government of 1934 introduced the Bank of Canada Act. The government of that day created the Bank of Canada, with shares to be issued to the general public. There was great controversy over that and it was pointed out, just as it has been pointed out to the minister in this debate, that it was most important to the national interest for the nation to have control of its financial institutions. The Liberal government of 1936 decreed that the Bank of Canada should hold 51 per cent of the shares, with the public holding the rest. Actually the government of Canada held the bank shares. In 1938, if my dates are correct, the Bank of Canada became a wholly owned government corporation belonging to the people of this country. There were good reasons for making sure that the bank was an instrument wholly owned by the people of Canada just as there is an excellent reason for saying that the satellite corporation ought to be wholly owned by the people of Canada. The same difficulties which arose with the Bank of Canada will plague an organization with this three-legged stool, as the minister refers to it. It may become to be known as a Triton with horses each going off in a different direction. The minister is setting up an organization which is impossible from any point of view.

● (4:00 p.m.)

My reason for supporting the amendment of the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Schreyer) is not that I have a particular grievance with private ownership as against public or mixed ownership. That is not what I am arguing. In this case the reasons for public ownership are so compelling that they should be acknowledged and recognized by the minister. I can think of many cases where I would be